

# IOWA REGISTERED HIGHWAY ROUTES 1914-1925

There were few guides for travelers crossing Iowa in 1838 when it was organized as a territory, and travelers often became lost or wandered far out of their way. The 1838 Territorial Government authorized the first state roads, and the federal government appropriated money to expedite the movement of soldiers. The Territorial Government used the federal money for laying out a road from Dubuque to Keokuk via Iowa City, and this was the beginning of what was to become a 112,000-mile system of roads and streets in Iowa. The original roads followed the high ground of the state, and were known as ridge roads; but as the state was settled, roads began to follow section lines to accomodate landowners.

The early roads were used mainly by farmers to move their goods to town, with railroads handling most of the long-distance travel until the early 1900s. Even then, there were 104,000 miles of roads in the state when the first road inventory was taken in 1904. However, only about 2 percent of these roads were classified as improved.

Associations representing bicycle riders, threshermen and auto owners began campaigning for better roads in the early 1900s, and Iowans became more vocal in demanding roads which would make travel between different areas of the state easier.

In response to these demands the Iowa Legislature designated Iowa State College as the highway commission in 1904. The highway commission was to devise plans and methods for construction and maintenance of roads, and to disseminate that information to the county supervisors and other persons involved with highways.

Communities recognized, even at this early state of Iowa's development, the importance of good roads to their towns. To promote roads, communities along a route would cooperate in the development of that road. Each community was responsible for the maintenance of a certain portion of the road, and the upkeep of the markers for that route. This cooperation spread from community to community, and continuous routes soon crisscrossed the state.

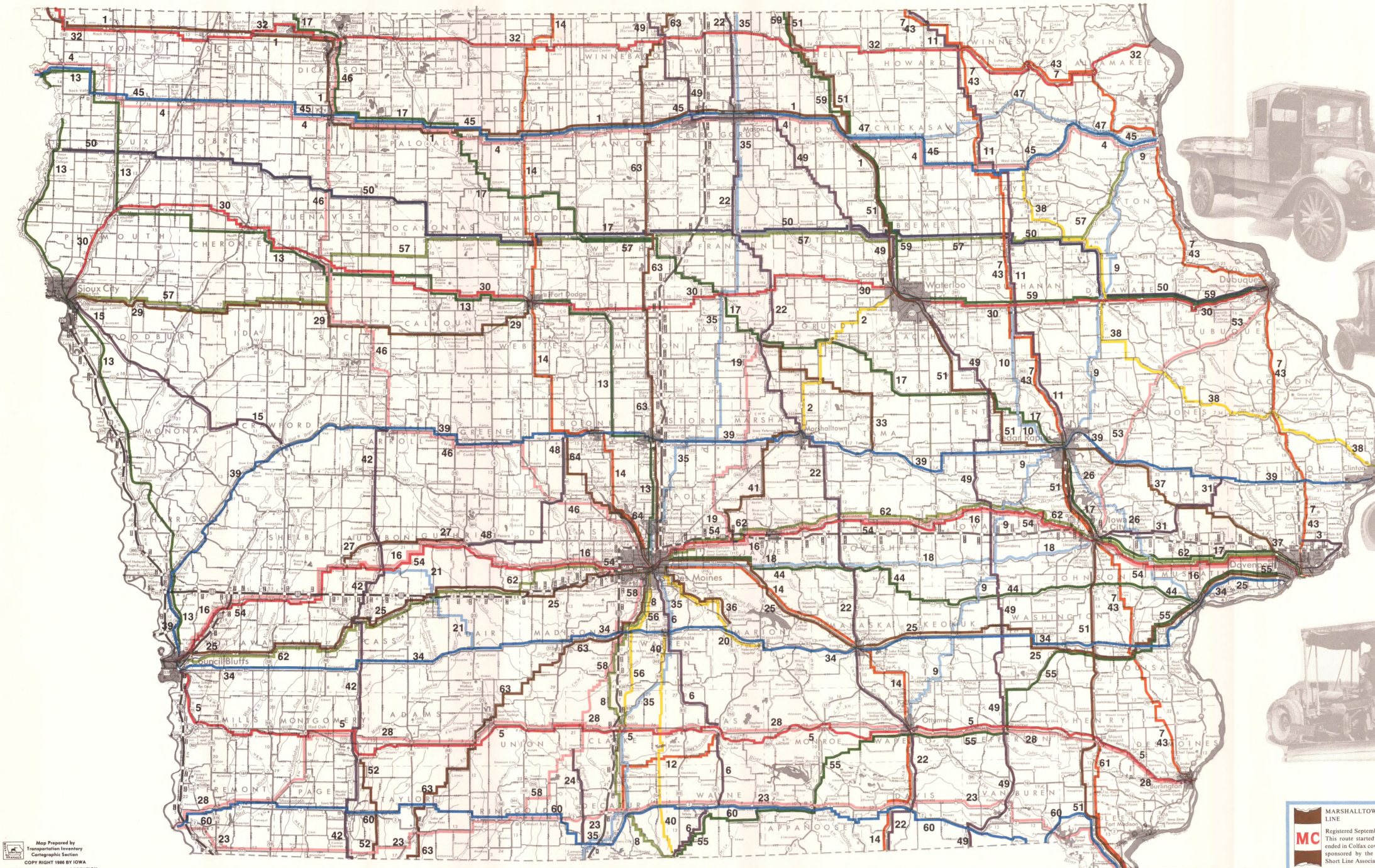
In 1913 the Iowa Legislature recognized the need for greater coordination in the road system, and formed the Iowa State Highway Commission, which had general supervisory control over all county and township road officials.

At the same time, the Legislature enacted a law to protect the names of the highways which had been developed by the communities. The Highway Commission was given the responsibility for registering the routes, including the authority to decide who had priority for the use of route names, color combinations and designs for continuous routes of 25 miles or more in length.

A primary road law passed in 1919 provided federal aid for building and improving roads, and in 1920, the Highway Commission began numbering the road systems. The registration of routes by associations promoting continuous routes was continued through 1924, but in 1925 it was decided the official highway markings placed by the state highway departments had replaced the need for registered route markings.

In addition, in 1925 the American Association of State Highway Officials suggested highway markings use standardized information and directional signs. In the same year the U.S. Congress also approved a nationwide road numbering plan which assigned odd numbers to north-south routes, and even numbers to east-west routes.

There were 64 routes registered with the Iowa State Highway Commission between 1913 and 1924. These routes are shown on this map over a background of the current Transportation Map. If you would like more information concerning any of these routes, contact your local library or the Iowa Department of Transportation.



Map Prepared by  
Transportation Inventory  
Cartographic Section  
COPY RIGHT 1988 BY IOWA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

 <p><b>ATLANTIC-YELLOWSTONE-PACIFIC HIGHWAY</b> Registered September 26, 1923 This was a coast to coast route and entered Lyon County on Ia. and covered approximately 342 miles through Iowa.</p>	 <p><b>BLUE J HIGHWAY</b> Registered March 23, 1917 The Iowa portion of this route started at Des Moines and passed through Linville on into Missouri. The route covered 259 miles and was sponsored by the Blue 'J' Highway Association of Iowa.</p>	 <p><b>CENTER POINT MOTOR CLUB HIGHWAY</b> Registered September 1914 This route started in Cedar Rapids and went north to St. Paul, Minnesota via Rochester and covered 265 miles. Sponsors were Center Point Motor Club.</p>	 <p><b>DETROIT, LINCOLN AND DENVER HIGHWAY</b> Registered September 6, 1921 This route started in Detroit, Michigan and ended at Denver, Colorado with the Iowa portion beginning at Davenport on through Council Bluffs. Sponsor was the Detroit-Lincoln and Denver Highway Association.</p>	 <p><b>FARMERS HIGHWAY</b> Registered June 9, 1916 Route started at Exira and ended in Greenfield for a distance of 41 miles and was sponsored by Grant and Audubon Townships Farmers Booster Club.</p>	 <p><b>GREEN CRESCENT</b> Registered July 30, 1914 This route covered a distance of 63 miles in Muscatine and ended in Des Moines.</p>	 <p><b>HERBERT HOOVER HIGHWAY</b> Registered August 15, 1923 This 46 mile route started in Iowa City and ended in Lowden and was sponsored by the Herbert Hoover Association.</p>	 <p><b>JOHN D. PALMAREE TRAIL</b> Registered April 3, 1916 This 28 mile route started in Pleasantville and ended in Des Moines.</p>	 <p><b>M.C. TRAIL (Marysville-Carroll Trail)</b> Registered December 6, 1919 Starting point for this route was Marysville, Missouri and ended in Carroll, Iowa and was sponsored by the Marysville-Carroll Trail Association.</p>	 <p><b>PERRY PIKE</b> Registered December 22, 1916 Starting point of this route was Ogden and ended in Guthrie Center and was 50 miles. The sponsor was the Perry Bureau of Commerce Association.</p>	 <p><b>RIVER TO RIVER ROUTE</b> Registered April 16, 1918 This route started in Davenport and ended in Council Bluffs covering 316 miles and was of military importance. The sponsor was the River to River Route Association.</p>	 <p><b>WAUBONSIE TRAIL</b> Registered April 3, 1916 This 289 mile route started in Nebraska City, Nebraska, and ended in Keokuk and was sponsored by the Waubonsie Trail Association.</p>
 <p><b>BLACK DIAMOND TRAIL</b> Registered September 25, 1916 This route started in Cedar Falls and terminated in Marshalltown covering a distance of 57 miles. This route was sponsored by Black Diamond Trail Association.</p>	 <p><b>BURLINGTON WAY</b> Registered December 1, 1917 This route started in Burlington and ended in Cresco and followed the same route as the Mississippi Valley Highway over a distance of 409 miles. The sponsor was Burlington Way Good Roads Association of Iowa.</p>	 <p><b>CHARLTON AND LEON SHORT LINE</b> Registered April 3, 1916 Route started at Charlton and ended in Leon, over a distance of 40 miles.</p>	 <p><b>DIAGONAL TRAIL</b> Registered December 4, 1918 This route started in Lake Park and ended at Davenport over a distance of 335 miles and was sponsored by the Diagonal Trail Association.</p>	 <p><b>GLACIER TRAIL</b> Registered September 6, 1921 This route started in St. Louis, Missouri and ended at Glacier National Park, Montana, a total of 1846 miles. The sponsor was the Glacier Trail Association.</p>	 <p><b>HAMLIN SHORT ROUTE</b> Registered September 25, 1916 This route covered 33 miles from Elkhorn to Guthrie Center.</p>	 <p><b>IMPERIAL HIGHWAY</b> Registered January 4, 1918 This route started in Iowa City and ended in Clinton over a distance of 150 miles. The sponsor was the Imperial Highway Association.</p>	 <p><b>KING'S HIGHWAY</b> Registered June 28, 1915 This 95 mile route started at Davenport and ended in Cedar Rapids, and was sponsored by the Auto Club of the King's Highway.</p>	 <p><b>MISSISSIPPI VALLEY HIGHWAY</b> Registered September 17, 1920 This highway follows the same route in Iowa as the Burlington Way then extended north into Minnesota and south to Louisiana. Its total length was approximately 2000 miles and was sponsored by the Mississippi Valley Highway Association.</p>	 <p><b>PERSHING WAY</b> Registered August 14, 1919 This route started in Winnipeg, Canada and over a distance of 1,800 miles ended in New Orleans, Louisiana and was sponsored by the Pershing Way Association.</p>	 <p><b>SOUTHWEST TRAILS</b> Registered June 28, 1915 The starting point of this route was Kansas City, Missouri and ended in Chicago, Illinois, covering a distance of 540 miles. Sponsor was the Southwest Trails Association.</p>	 <p><b>WEBSTER TRAIL</b> Registered April 21, 1921 This 48 mile route started in Mt. Pleasant and ended in Keokuk. It was sponsored by the Webster Trail Good Roads Association.</p>
 <p><b>BLACK HAWK TRAIL</b> Registered September 25, 1916 This 35 mile route started and ended in Davenport and was also known as the Loop Highway. The sponsor was the Davenport Auto Club.</p>	 <p><b>CAPITOL HIGHWAY</b> Registered June 9, 1916 This route started in Des Moines and ended in Linville, a distance of 91 miles. The sponsor was the Capitol Highway Association.</p>	 <p><b>CUSTER BATTLEFIELD HIGHWAY</b> Registered December 23, 1919 The route started in Omaha, Nebraska and ended at Glacier National Park, Montana, covering a distance of 1475 miles and was sponsored by the Custer Battlefield Highway Association.</p>	 <p><b>DIAMOND TRAIL</b> Registered December 22, 1916 The length of this route was 120 miles and started in Iowa City and ended in Des Moines. The sponsor was the Diamond Trail Association.</p>	 <p><b>GOLDEN ROD HIGHWAY</b> Registered October 23, 1919 This route originally started in Nebraska City, Nebraska and ended in Bedford, Iowa. In November 1921 an application for an extension to this route to Keokuk was granted.</p>	 <p><b>HARDING HIGHWAY</b> Registered June 16, 1924 This route covered 3000 miles from Washington D.C. to Los Angeles and passed through Burlington and on through Nebraska City, Nebraska. Sponsors were Harding Highway Association.</p>	 <p><b>INDIAN TRAIL</b> Registered February 5, 1920 This 53 mile route started in Tama and ended in Eldora and was sponsored by the Indian Highway Association.</p>	 <p><b>LINCOLN HAWKEYE PIKE</b> Registered January 22, 1918 This route started at West Union and ended in Clinton over a distance of 150 miles. The sponsor was the Lincoln Hawkeye Pike Association.</p>	 <p><b>MUSCATINE-DES MOINES SHORT LINE</b> Registered December 28, 1917 The starting point was Muscatine and ended in Des Moines and was 154 miles in length and sponsored by the Muscatine-Des Moines Short Line Association.</p>	 <p><b>RAINBOW TRAIL</b> Registered May 16, 1922 This 300 miles extended from Hawarden to Dubuque and was sponsored by the Hawarden Booster Club.</p>	 <p><b>STAR ROUTE</b> Registered in December 1, 1917 This route started in Oskola and ended in Des Moines and was 48 miles in length. It was sponsored by the Red Star Line Association.</p>	 <p><b>WHITEWAY-7-HIGHWAY</b> Registered September 21, 1922 This 527 mile route started in Chicago, Illinois and ended in Omaha, Nebraska. It entered Iowa at Davenport and continued through to Council Bluffs on what is now U.S. 6. The sponsor was the Whiteway Highway Association.</p>
 <p><b>BLACK HILLS HIGHWAY</b> Registered May 6, 1924 This route started in Chicago, Illinois and terminated in Denver, Colorado covering a distance of 1300 miles. The route through Iowa followed what is now U.S. 18. The sponsor was the Black Hills Highway Association.</p>	 <p><b>CEDAR RAPIDS, OTTUMWA AND MCGREGOR TRAIL</b> Registered March 23, 1917 This route started in Ottumwa and ended at McGregor and covered a distance of 192 miles. It was also known as the Park Highway.</p>	 <p><b>DANIEL BOONE TRAIL</b> Registered December 22, 1916 The route started at St. Paul, Minnesota and ended at St. Louis, Missouri, over a distance of 566 miles and was sponsored by the Daniel Boone Trail Association.</p>	 <p><b>ELDORA-STATE CENTER AND COLFAX HIGHWAY</b> Registered September 17, 1920 This route started at Eldora and ended at Colfax, approximately 61 miles long and was sponsored by Eldora-State Center and Colfax Highway Association.</p>	 <p><b>GRAND LINE</b> Registered March 23, 1917 Starting point of this route was Hopeville and ended at Lamoni, a distance of 27 miles.</p>	 <p><b>HAWKEYE CUT-OFF</b> Registered September 25, 1916 This route covered a distance of 140 miles and was sponsored by the Hawkeye Highway Association.</p>	 <p><b>I.O.A. SHORT LINE</b> Registered January 8, 1924 The route from Davenport to Council Bluffs covered a distance of 330 miles. The letters I.O.A. do not mean anything except that when spoken they sound like the name of our State. Sponsor was I.O.A. Short Line Association.</p>	 <p><b>LINCOLN HIGHWAY</b> Registered December 2, 1916 This was the country's first designated transcontinental route from New York to San Francisco, over 3000 miles in all. It entered Clinton on U.S. 30 and passed through Council Bluffs.</p>	 <p><b>NATIONAL PARKS PIKE</b> Registered April 29, 1920 This route started in Madison, Wisconsin and ended in Yellowstone National Park and was sponsored by the National Parks Pike Association.</p>	 <p><b>RED BALL ROUTE</b> Registered January 2, 1915 This 600 mile route started in St. Paul, Minnesota and ended in St. Louis, Missouri and was of military importance. The sponsor was the Red Ball Route Association.</p>	 <p><b>TALL CORN TRAIL</b> Registered September 19, 1924 This route started in McGregor and ended in Sioux City and was sponsored by the Tall Corn Trail Association.</p>	 <p><b>WILSON HIGHWAY</b> Registered September 13, 1918, amended June 24, 1920. This route named for Woodrow Wilson started at the Iowa/ Missouri south of Bedford and travelled north to Emmos, Minnesota approximately 273 miles in length. The sponsor was the Wilson Highway Association.</p>
 <p><b>BLUE GRASS ROUTE</b> Registered December 1, 1917 This route started in Burlington and ended in Council Bluffs over a distance of 310 miles. This east/west route was of military importance.</p>	 <p><b>CEDAR RAPIDS, URBANA-INDEPENDENCE SHORT LINE</b> Registered November 1, 1923 Route started at Cedar Rapids and ended in Independence, a distance of 43 miles.</p>	 <p><b>DENISON-SIOUX CITY CUT-OFF</b> Registered September 6, 1921 This route started at Denison and ended in Sioux City.</p>	 <p><b>EVERETT POWERS HIGHWAY</b> Registered July 20, 1918 This route from Knoxville to Des Moines was named in honor of Everett Powers who was the first elected man from Richland Township, Warren County and the first to lose his life in action in France on May 27, 1917.</p>	 <p><b>GREAT WHITE WAY</b> Registered July 20, 1917 This route from Davenport to Council Bluffs totaling 340 miles was the first route to get a certificate from the Highway Commission. It was also of military importance. The sponsor was the Great White Way Association.</p>	 <p><b>HAWKEYE HIGHWAY</b> Registered June 29, 1917 This route which was of military importance started in Dubuque and ended in Sioux City, a distance of approximately 360 miles. The sponsor was the Hawkeye Highway Association.</p>	 <p><b>JEFFERSON HIGHWAY</b> Registered September 25, 1916 This 2000 mile route started in Winnipeg, Canada and ended in New Orleans, Louisiana and was of military importance. The sponsor was the Jefferson Highway Association.</p>	 <p><b>LINEVILLE-INDIANOLA SHORT LINE</b> Registered December 5, 1916 This route from Lineville to Indianola was approximately 67 miles long and was sponsored by the Lineville-Indianola Short Line Association.</p>	 <p><b>OKOBOJI TRAIL</b> Registered March 23, 1917 Starting point of this route was Des Moines and ended in Arnolds Park a distance of 185 miles and was sponsored by Perry Bureau of Commerce Association.</p>	 <p><b>RED LINE ROUTE</b> Registered June 9, 1916 This route started at the Missouri State Line and ended at Villisca for a total of 53 miles and was sponsored by the Red Line Association.</p>	 <p><b>TOURISTS TRAIL</b> Registered March 23, 1917 This route started in Mt. Airy and ended in Des Moines for a distance of 92 miles.</p>	 <p><b>WOODWARD-OGDEN CUT-OFF</b> Registered December 4, 1918 This route was 50 miles long and started in Ogden and ended in Des Moines. It was sponsored by the Woodward-Ogden Cut-off Association.</p>